



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of California*

501 I Street, Suite 10-100
Sacramento, California 95814

916/554-2700
Fax 916/554-2900

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Contact: Patty Pontello, 916-554-2706
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae/home

**LOCAL OFFICIALS TEAM UP WITH NATIONAL LEADERSHIP
TO REDUCE GUN CRIME IN OUR COMMUNITY**

Federal Gun Crime Prosecutions Hit Record Highs, While Violent Crime Rate Hits 30-Year Low

SACRAMENTO, CA—The national Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) conference met this week in Kansas City, Missouri and included a ten person delegation from the Sacramento area. Attorney General John Ashcroft spoke to over 1,150 federal, state, and local prosecutors, law enforcement officials, community leaders, and other members of the PSN teams from across the nation who came together to discuss efforts to reduce and prosecute gun crime. PSN is President Bush's comprehensive initiative to combat gun crime in America by providing locally-based programs with the tools and resources they need to succeed.

"Through Project Safe Neighborhood's unprecedented partnership of state, local and federal leaders, we are turning the tide on gun crime," said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "We are taking gun-wielding criminals off our streets. The last three years represent a record of great success, but working together, we can do even more to make our neighborhoods safe."

United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott stated: "We are working very closely with our state and local partners to reduce gun violence, and create safer communities through PSN. We are taking dangerous felons with guns off the streets. I am particularly pleased that our progress in this area exceeds the national pace."

Local law enforcement leaders also support PSN. "The Sheriff's Department embraces the concept that brings federal resources to bear to mitigate the effect of those who engage in lawlessness, and use firearms as a means to commit their crimes," said Sacramento County Sheriff Lou Blanas.

Federal Gun Crime Prosecutions Have Increased Significantly Every Year Under Project Safe Neighborhoods. From FY 2000 to FY 2003, federal firearms prosecutions increased nationally by 68%. In FY 2003, the Justice Department filed over 10,500 federal firearms cases—the highest number ever recorded by the Department. The number of

defendants charged with federal gun crimes rose from approximately 10,600 to over 13,000 from FY 2002 to FY 2003, a record increase of almost 23%. These figures are the highest on record in a single year since the Department began recording this information. In FY 2003, nearly all — 93% — of convicted defendants, who were originally charged with federal firearms offenses, were sentenced to some time in prison for convictions on firearms charges or other charges. 72% were sentenced to more than three years in prison, and over half of all defendants convicted were sentenced to more than five years in federal prison. State and local prosecutions have also increased.

Project Safe Neighborhoods Is Working In the Eastern District of California. United States Attorney Scott, working side by side with state and local law enforcement, prosecutors and other community leaders, has created a PSN strategy to fit the unique gun crime problem in the Eastern District. Criminals who use guns are prosecuted under federal or state laws, depending on which jurisdiction can provide the most appropriate punishment.

United States Attorney Scott and the PSN Task Force in the District have enhanced the PSN program to reflect the fact that the Eastern District is large and geographically-diverse, comprised of both major urban cores and widespread rural regions. The strategy must also be tailored to address the primary contributors to gun violence in the District, namely criminal street gangs, domestic violence offenders, armed drug offenders trafficking in methamphetamine and marijuana, and parolees, as well as juveniles as both offender and victim.

In Calendar Year (CY) 2003 the Eastern District filed 64 PSN cases compared to 34 in CY 2002. This was an increase of 88%. In CY 2004 the District has filed 75 PSN cases as of June 15, 2004 for an increase of 88% over the same time in CY 2003 in which the District filed 40 PSN cases. The cases have come from throughout the District which stretches from the Oregon border to the north Los Angeles County line.

Project Safe Neighborhoods Has Contributed to Decreasing the Violent Crime Rate to Its Lowest Levels in 30 Years, But Reducing Gun Crime Remains an Important Goal. The violent crime rate is now at its lowest level since 1973, when the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics started collecting criminal victimization data. The violent crime rate for the first two years of the Bush Administration (2001-2002) was nearly 21% lower than for 1999-2000. The per capita number of violent crimes *involving firearms* has dropped 14% in 2001-2002, from 1999-2000. There were approximately 64,000 fewer gun crimes and approximately 12% (almost 130,000) fewer victims of gun crime in 2001-2002, than in 1999-2000.

Project Safe Neighborhoods Takes a Multifaceted Approach to Reducing Gun Crime. Gun crime reduction is President Bush's top domestic criminal justice initiative, and the Bush Administration has devoted over \$1 billion to Project Safe Neighborhoods in its first four years (FY 2001 to FY 2004). The funds have been used to hire new federal, state, and local prosecutors, provide training, hire research and community outreach support, and develop and promote effective prevention and deterrence efforts. Each of the 94 federal judicial districts engages in deterrence and prevention efforts through community outreach and media campaigns and ensures that law enforcement and

prosecutors have the training they need.

The PSN conference is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice. To find out more about PSN and its local programs, visit the PSN website at www.psn.gov.

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